

automatically downloading data, including empirical data sets, from a plurality of computer sites over the internet;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, automatically screening same to identify the potential presence of identification data steganographically encoded therein;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets screened by said screening operation, discerning identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein; and

generating a report identifying steganographically encoded empirical data sets identified by the foregoing steps, and the site from which each was downloaded;

wherein there is calibration data steganographically encoded within at least one empirical data set, said calibration data having one or more known properties facilitating identification thereof during the discerning step;

the method including identifying the calibration data within the empirical data set and using data obtained thereby to aid in discerning the identification data from the empirical data set;

wherein the empirical data set has been corrupted since being encoded, said corruption including a process selected from the group consisting of: misregistration and scaling of the empirical data set;

the method further including using said data to compensate for said corruption, wherein the identification data can nonetheless be recovered from the empirical data set notwithstanding said corruption.

1. (Amended) A method for surveying distribution of proprietary empirical data sets on computer sites accessible via the internet, comprising:

providing a master code signal useful for detecting steganographic coding within empirical data sets;

automatically downloading data, including empirical data sets, from a plurality of computer sites over the internet;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, discerning certain identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein, said discerning employing said master code signal as a decoding key; and

generating a report identifying steganographically encoded empirical data sets identified by the foregoing steps, and the site from which each was downloaded;

wherein there is calibration data steganographically encoded within at least one empirical data set, said calibration data having one or more known properties facilitating identification thereof during the discerning step;

the method including identifying the calibration data within the empirical data set and using data obtained thereby to aid in discerning the identification data from the empirical data set;

wherein the empirical data set has been corrupted since being encoded, said corruption including a process selected from the group consisting of: misregistration and scaling of the empirical data set;